

MEMORANDUM

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON

ACTION 27274

April 13, 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR DR. KISSINGER

FROM: Harold H. Saunders *Hal*  
SUBJECT: Tunisian Military Assistance

You may recall that when the President saw former Tunisian Foreign Minister Bourguiba, Jr. in New York at the UN in September 1969, he assured him that the U.S. would do what it reasonably could to help meet Tunisia's defense needs.

Doing this has been a continuing struggle because of the low overall ceiling imposed in the Foreign Assistance Act on military assistance to Africa and the need to recognize that Tunisia's economy will not support a large defense establishment. Therefore, our programmers have had to work at levels well below what the military planners might design even as a minimal defense force for Tunisia.

At present, the military assistance programmers are working within the concept of a \$45 million package over 5 years -- this representing not the amount of money we can provide but the value of the equipment that Tunisia might try to procure from all sources.

In the attached memorandum and telegram, State and Defense seek clearance on a telegram informing the Tunisians that we have been able to add \$1 million to the present \$3 million program for FY1971. Within that ceiling, the Tunisians would make their own choices between items earlier programmed and new items available, including some M-48 tanks, medium helicopters, mortars and anti-aircraft artillery.

The particular reason for seeking White House clearance on the attached package is that Secretary Rogers, in order to make the most of this modest increase, has decided to send a personal message to Foreign Minister Masmoudi. In that message he would recall the President's earlier expression of "full sympathy with Tunisia's sustained efforts to

- 2 -

achieve its economic and social development goals in an atmosphere of peace and security." The most significant statement in this message is in the next to last paragraph of the message [bottom of page 3 in the first telegram attached to the Eliot to Kissinger memorandum]. This assures the Foreign Minister "on behalf of the President that he remains personally interested in Tunisia's security and that the United States will do what it can, within the limits imposed by available resources, to assist in its sound development." The statement of personal "interest in Tunisia's security" has over the years represented the extent to which we have been willing to go in response to Tunisia's request for a special security relationship with the United States. This says neither more nor less than has been said before.

Recommendation: That you clear the attached telegram with its references to the President's concern for Tunisian security and development.

Approve

*AK*

Disapprove